

"Indian Roller." *Coracias garrula* [Sic.] Apparently both the European Roller (*C. garrulus*) and the Indian Roller (*C. indicus*, or more correctly *C. benghalensis*) breed in Mesopotamia, but the latter species appears to be prevalent south of Bagdad, though the European Roller seems to be the representative species at Bagdad according to Sassi. I have long been puzzled by Mr. Cumming's notes on the Rollers in the *Ibis* 1886, p. 488, and in the light of the later communication can only suppose that by some mistake the notes on the two species have been transposed.

With regard to the small Bustard shot on two occasions by Mr. Cumming, but not preserved, if noticeably smaller than *Honbara u. macqueeni*, it was in all probability the Little Bustard, *Otis tetrax*, which is known to occur both in Mesopotamia and the Zagros. The Eastern Pintail Sandgrouse (*P. alchata candacuta*) breeds in large numbers both in the Tigris and Euphrates valleys as well as near Ahwaz.

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No. XXIV.—THE GIANT TORTOISE LIVING IN CEYLON.

(With a plate.)

Through the kindness of Mr. W. Ormiston of Kalupandani, Huldummulle, Ceylon, we are able to reproduce a photograph of a giant tortoise, living at Hirumbard near Galle and which appears to be the same animal Mr. J. Pearson of the Colombo Museum, wrote about in *Spolia Zeylanica* Vol. VII, p. 209, 1911. According to that note, this tortoise belongs to the kind known as *Testudo gigantea*, a species which was formerly indigenous, to the Seychelles, but the history of how this particular one came to Ceylon and how long it has been there is obscure. It appears to have been at Galle since 1846 and Mr. Paul Pieris, C.C.S., wrote to Mr. Pearson that some years ago he was shown by a relation of his some papers, which were said to prove that the tortoise was 120 years old.

As a matter of fact that is not a very great age for one of these giant tortoises and quite recently the home papers reported the death of the old tortoise at the Zoo, which is stated to have been 260 years old. In Lord Rothschild's museum at Tring there is the shell of an example of *T. gigantea*, which measures 46'-5" in length and belonged to an animal weighing 593 lbs., said to have been 300 years old when it died.

These large tortoises formerly inhabited the Galapagos islands, Madagascar, Aldabare, the Seychelles, &c., but for many years have been extinct in their native haunts, except were especially protected. Some of the islands on which they were indigenous were uninhabited by men, but with the advent of sailing ships from the west the tortoises were doomed, as captains of merchantmen found in them a useful food, which could easily be kept alive and so provide fresh meat for the crews, who in these days were mostly fed on salt junk. The history of these interesting animals has been written both by Dr. Gunther and Lord Rothschild, and Dr. Gadow in the volume on "Reptilia" in the Cambridge Natural History gives a short summary of what is known about them. In the Swalik hills in the Punjab the remains of a gigantic tortoise have been found, this animal lived probably in the early Pliocene times and was considerably larger than any of the recent giant tortoises.

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